FISHERIES DIVISION
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Southern Lake Huron Management Unit

ISSUE 1

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What is the SLHMU?

The Southern Lake Huron Management Unit (SLHMU) encompasses the southern Michigan shores of Lake Huron including Saginaw Bay and all of the waters that make up the watersheds that drain into the southern portion of Lake Huron. Our work area includes all or portions of the following counties: Arenac, Bay, Clare, Genesee, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Iosco, Isabella, Lapeer, Livingston, Midland, Mecosta, Montcalm, Oakland, Ogemaw, Roscommon, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, St. Clair, and Tuscola. Fisheries staff working in this unit include a Unit Manager and Management Biologist who work out of the Bay City Operations Service Center, a Management Biologist stationed at the Lapeer State Game Area, a technician staff who work out of the Bay City Fisheries Warehouse, and 5 Fisheries Assistants (creel clerks) who perform the Great Lakes creel census out of various ports.

Who we are.

We are public trustees employed to fulfill the mission, vision, and values of the Michigan DNR, Fisheries Division.

Fisheries Division Mission

To protect and enhance Michigan's aquatic life and habitats for the benefit of current and future generations.

Fisheries Division Vision

To provide world-class freshwater fishing opportunities, supported by healthy aquatic environments, which enhance the quality of life in Michigan.

Fisheries Division Values

The following six values guide the work for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division:

Integrity	Leadership	Innovation
Professionalism	Collaboration	Transparency

2013 Projects

Did you know?

Between April 1st and October 31st, 2012, anglers fished 532,075 hours on greater Saginaw Bay (Twas to Port Austin) and caught 229,157 walleye and 193,778 yellow perch.

Anglers also caught an estimated 20,226 freshwater drum, 14,704 channel catfish, 9,610 white bass, 4,544 smallmouth bass, 4,379 northern pike, and 3,517 largemouth bass.

Southern Lake Huron Creel Census

Great Lakes Creel Census in the Southern Lake Huron Management Unit is part of the Statewide Angler Survey Program. Five Fisheries Assistants (creel census clerks) conduct the census on the waters of greater Saginaw Bay (which includes Tawas Bay) and ports along the tip and outside of the Thumb. Ports and sites regularly visited by our clerks include Tawas Bay, Singing Bridge, the Standish – Pinconning – Linwood area, Bay City, Essexville, Quanicassee, Sebewaing, Bay Port, Wildfowl Bay, Caseville, Port Austin, Grindstone City, Harbor Beach, Port Sanilac, and Lexington.

Work shifts for the clerks are randomly selected by a statistical program and include early and late shifts so as to cover all parts of the day. Each week, both weekend days and three weekdays are surveyed during the months of April – October. A winter creel census is also conducted to cover ice fishing in Tawas and Saginaw bays and the Saginaw River from January 1st – March 15th.

Angler effort is estimated from shore, pier, boat and trailer counts done by the clerks at randomly selected times and locations, combined with counts made by airplane flights over the area. Clerks interview anglers at the end of their fishing trip to gather biological information from the catch as well as demographic information about the anglers. Boat, shore, and pier anglers are all targeted equally for interviews. Information collected by the clerks is combined with angler counts to produce scientifically derived estimates of catch and fishing effort (angler-hours) by species and by port for all of southern Lake Huron. These estimates are critical in allowing us to follow trends in the fishery and identify incipient problems in fish abundance or growth.

If you are contacted by one of our clerks, please take a few minutes to take part in the interview. The information they gather helps us to make important decisions concerning Great Lakes fishery management.

2013 Projects

Dam Removals

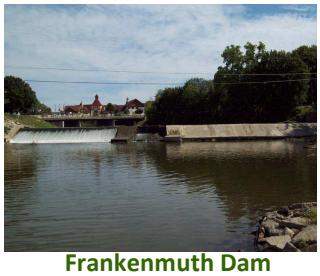
Three dams in SLHMU are scheduled for removal or modifications beginning in 2013.

Vassar Dam

Vassar Dam located in Vassar, MI on the Cass River, is scheduled for complete removal in 2013. The City of Vassar received partial funding from the DNR, Dams Grant Management Program for this project.

Shiatown Dam

Shiatown Dam located north of Durand, MI on the Shiawassee River. This tax reverted structure is scheduled for removal/modification in 2014. Project design and engineering are underway in 2013. The Friends of the Shiawassee River received partial funding from the DNR, Dams Grant Management Program for this project.



Frankenmuth Dam

Frankenmuth Dam located in Frankenmuth, MI on the Cass River, is scheduled to be modified into a rock ramp structure with work scheduled to begin in 2013. The City of Frankenmuth is overseeing this project.

Trout Creel Surveys

Southern Lake Huron Management Unit is conducting a postcard/internet survey to help in the management of two trout lakes.

Anglers who fish on Marl Lake in Mecosta County and Lake George in Ogemaw County are asked to fill out surveys. The survey looks to evaluate various fisheries and angler preferences on these water bodies. Angler input is being sought in one of two ways. Survey cards are available on site and anglers are asked to fill out one card, per person, per trip. The survey card is self-addressed and can be mailed free of charge. Another option is an online survey available at:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/marllakesurvey

www.surveymonkey.com/s/lakegeorgesurvey

Questions on the survey include type of fishing method used, number of days anglers fish the lakes in a calendar year, and specifics of the day's catch. Participation in this survey effort is key to proper fisheries management.

Inland Lake and Stream Surveys

During the course of the year, SLHMU conducts a number of inland lake and stream surveys. Typically, habitat and biological data is collected during the open water season and analyzed during the winter months. Completed reports are ready in the spring of the following year.

The following surveys were conducted in 2012 and reports are available upon request:

Inland Lakes

Arnold Lake, Clare County
Big Seven Lake, Oakland County
Cody-Estey Pond, Bay County
Devoe Lake, Ogemaw County
Holloway Reservoir, Genesee County
Jewett Lake, Ogemaw County
Lake Chemung, Livingston County
Lake George, Ogemaw County
Lake Ponemah, Genesee County
Lobdell Lake, Genesee County
Marl Lake, Montcalm County
Merrill Lake, Mecosta County
Sawdel Lake, Lapeer County
Smallwood Lake, Gladwin County
Tobico Marsh Lake, Bay County
Holloway Reservoir, Genesee County

Streams

Bad Axe Creek, Huron County
Buck Creek, Iosco County
Cass River, Saginaw County
Chippewa River, Midland County
Flint River, Genesee County
Gamble Creek, Ogemaw County
Rifle Creek, Ogemaw County
Shiawassee River, Saginaw County
W. Br. Cedar River, Clare County

The following lake and streams are scheduled for surveying in 2013:

Inland Lakes

Blanchard Mill Pond, Isabella County
Streaked Lake, Gladwin County
Tobico Marsh Lagoon, Bay County
Nestor Lake, Clare County
Wildwood Lake, Oakland County
Lake Minnewanna, Lapeer County
Fish Lake, Lapeer County
Holloway Reservoir, Genesee County

Streams

Kawkawlin River, Bay County
S. Br. Bad River, Saginaw County
S. Br. Shiawassee River, Shiawassee Co.
Farmers Creek, Lapeer County
Cass River, Tuscola County
Gamble Creek, Ogemaw County
Chippewa River, Isabella County

Big Seven Lake, Oakland County

Big Seven Lake is located in the Seven Lakes State Park in Oakland County approximately one mile northwest of Holly, MI. It is a 170 acre impoundment of Swartz Creek of the Flint River watershed. In 2012, SHLMU conducted a survey to evaluate the status of the fisheries.

Big Seven Lake reaches a maximum depth of 50 feet but 70% of the lake has a depth of 10 feet or less. It is classified as an eutrophic lake that supports warm and cool water fish species. Much of the littoral zone is heavily vegetated. No-wake boat restrictions are enforced.

In the 2012 survey, a total of 1,627 fish representing 17 species were collected. Bluegill were most common comprising 61% of the total catch. Bluegill tend to be small in Big Seven Lake with an abundance in the 5-6 inch size range.

Despite being stocked every other year, walleye are believed to be in relatively low abundance. The 2012 survey captured 6 walleye averaging 22.3 inches.

The largemouth bass fishery of Big Seven Lake is in excellent shape. A total of 68 largemouth bass averaging 11.8 inches were collected. Forty-six percent of the bass collected were ≥ 14 inches including several in the 18 inch size group.

In addition to bluegill, walleye, and largemouth bass, anglers could expect to catch redear sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie, and the occasional northern pike. Along with a boat launch, there is ample shoreline fishing available at Big Seven Lake and it is a great location to take a youth fishing.

For more information on the 2012 Big Seven Lake survey go to the Fisheries Division Library website and the Status of Fisheries Reports link: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/BigSevenLake-SFR_410175_7.pdf

Volunteer Jessica Haller and fisheries technician Vince Balcer show off some Big Seven Lake largemouth bass.

A typical pumpkinseed from Big Seven Lake.

Smallwood Impoundment, Gladwin County

The impoundment reaches a maximum depth of 28 feet and has steep drop-offs. The shoal substrate is composed of sand, clay, pulpy peat, and fibrous peat. In deeper water, the bottom is mostly clay and pulpy peat. The immediate shoreline is high banked with gently rolling hills. In general, Smallwood Impoundment is considered a medium sized shallow depth lake with warm temperature characteristics.

Aquatic vegetation is the dominant form of aquatic habitat in the littoral zone with a common occurrence of algae and milfoil. Smallwood impoundment is classified as an eutrophic lake. These lakes are typically more turbid, may go anoxic at the bottom, and there may be problems with excessive plant growth. They are typically high in productivity and are dominated by warmwater fisheries. The conditions reflect the age of the impoundment and the development around it.

In the 2012 survey, total of 1,516 fish representing 19 species and one hybrid were collected. Bluegill were most common comprising 40.7% of the total catch. Bluegill are growing near state average and almost 25% were of acceptable size to anglers (6 inches or larger).

Despite being stocked every other year, walleye are believed to be in relatively low abundance. The 2012 survey captured 6 walleye averaging 19.8 inches. Anglers do catch more walleye than our analysis show. Timing of surveys and the vegetation make the status of the walleye population difficult to understand.

Both the largemouth and smallmouth bass fishery of Smallwood Impoundment are in excellent shape. A total of 30 bass were collected, with decent proportions of legal bass present. Bass were growing above state average.

Smallwood Impoundment is also managed for muskellunge in conjunction with the other 3 large impoundments on the Tittabawassee River. Northern Muskellunge and more recently Great Lakes Muskellunge have been stocked in the impoundment. No muskies were captured in the survey, but this is not uncommon during late spring/summer netting surveys.

In addition to bluegill, walleye, bass, and muskellunge, anglers could expect to catch pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie, rock bass, yellow perch, and northern pike.

Access to Smallwood Impoundment is fairly limited. Shore opportunity is available at the hydro-dam and road crossings and endings. Boats can launch at the private marine shop for a fee.

For more information on the 2012 Smallwood Impoundment survey go to the Fisheries Division Library website and the Status of Fisheries Reports link:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2013-157_422551_7.pdf

2013 Projects

Fish Rearing Pond Production

SLHMU operated 4 walleye rearing ponds in 2013 with assistance from the Saginaw Bay Walleye Club, Walleyes for Iosco County, and Arenac County Walleye Club. Newly hatched walleye (fry) are put into these ponds in April and allowed to grow to until they reach 1-2 inches. They are then harvested and stocked into various water bodies around the state.

Kawkawlin Rearing Pond	692,172
Auburn East Rearing Pond	162,509
Tawas Rearing Pond	311,357
Au Gres Rearing Pond	613,871
Total Production	1,779,909

In addition, SLHMU operated the Sanford Rearing Marsh for northern pike. Adult northern pike were placed into the marsh and allowed to spawn naturally. After approximately 6 weeks, the marsh was drained and 4,112 spring fingerlings averaging 4 inches were harvested and stocked into Long Lake, Lapeer County.

SLHMU 2013 Walleye Stocking

The following SLHMU water bodies were stocked with walleyes from our rearing ponds. Surplus walleye were transported to Northern Lake Huron and Central Lake Michigan management units for stocking.

Lake	County	Number	Lake	County	Number
Lake Nepessing	Lapeer	20,916	Sanford Lake	Midland	149,304
Chippewa Lake	Mecosta	39,799	Rock Lake	Montcalm	2,976
Pretty Lake	Mecosta	7,358	Eight Point Lake	Clare	20,774
Budd Lake	Clare	8,832	Smallwood Lake	Gladwin	12,443
Coldwater Lake	Isabella	12,375	Ross Lake	Gladwin	15,039
Littlefield Lake	Isabella	10,279	Round/Indian Lake	Iosco	14,531
Caro Impoundment	Tuscola	10,022	Sand Lake	Iosco	12,251
Murphy Lake	Tuscola	10,022	Lake Chemung	Livingston	16,360
Lake Fenton	Genesee	43,866	Big Seven Lake	Oakland	8,640
Lake Ponemah	Genesee	19,480	Dickinson Lake	Oakland	2,280

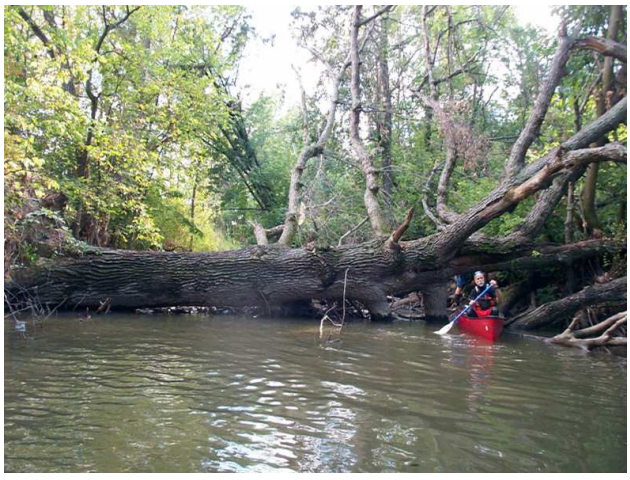
Flint River Stream Obstruction Removal

Wood structure in our rivers and streams provide valuable habitat for aquatic species. However, when massive logjams impede flow negative impacts can occur. These massive logjams divert flow and increase stream bank erosion and instream sedimentation. They also inhibit navigation and recreational use of the river. Such is the case in a 20 mile stretch of the South Branch Flint River in the Lapeer area where numerous logjams develop annually.

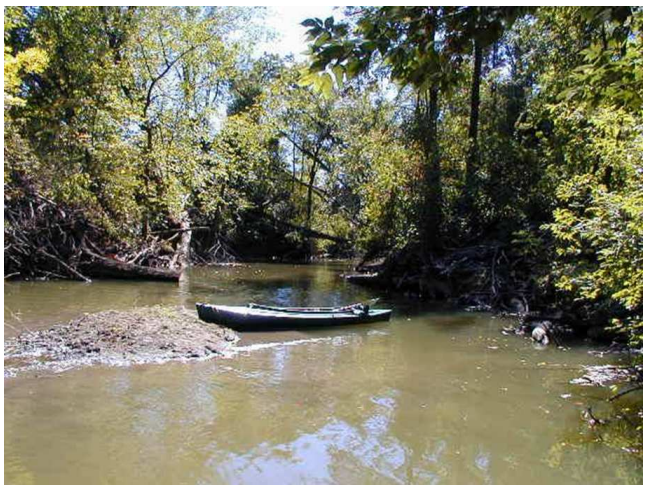
The SLHMU has partnered with the Flint River Watershed Coalition, the Lapeer Rotary Club, the City of Lapeer, and the Lapeer Juvenile Probation Office to remove these logjams in an environmentally friendly manner which restores navigation but also maintains instream habitat.

In 2006, a strategic plan for obstruction removal was developed and volunteers secured permissions from over 80 landowners to work on their properties. Between 2006-2012, the partnership has spent 156 days and 3,900 hours clearing stream obstructions. The partnership clears approximately 50 stream obstructions annually.

Stream obstruction removal on the South Branch Flint River is well underway for the 2013 season and the partnership has already spent 200 hours clearing 25 obstructions with many more to go. If you are interested in participating in the project contact Fisheries Biologist, Joe Leonardi at <leonardij@michigan.gov>.



A massive oak tree obstructs flow and navigation on the South Branch Flint River.



Using chainsaws and a portable gas winch, the massive oak obstruction is cleared for navigation while maintaining aquatic habitat.

To obtain information on where we stock fish, visit the DNR, Fisheries website at: http://www.michigandnr.com/fishstock/

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